

process by chemical companies; plastics producers; makers of rubber, dyes and pesticides; pulp and paper mills that use chlorine bleaches; and incinerator plants.

The report does not mention corporate producers of dioxin, such as Dow or Monsanto, who stand to lose if the EPA clamps down on dioxin releases. For years, these companies have orchestrated a political and scientific campaign to confuse the public and create a bureaucratic stalemate.

Corporations could face billion-dollar lawsuits for health and environmental damage caused by dioxin exposures. But they stand to save millions of dollars if they can settle pending lawsuits before the EPA reassessment is finalized, because the final report would give complainants greater evidence that dioxin is hazardous.

The Virginia-based Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste has called for an immediate halt to the incineration of hazardous waste and a phaseout of chlorinated organic compounds in all industrial production. Greenpeace's Zero Dioxin campaign argues that processes that create dioxin must either be altered so that no dioxin is produced, or banned.

SSU Censored Researcher:  
Mary Jo Thayer

COMMENTS: The significance of the recent findings of the health dangers of dioxin received very little attention from the mainstream press, according to investigative author Stephen Lester. "To my knowledge, there was no TV coverage, no coverage by the news weeklies and only minor coverage by several major newspapers. Given that dioxin is the most potent carcinogen for the general population ever tested; that we know that dioxin is coming from incinerators, paper mills and chemical processing plants; and that it is getting into dairy products, meat, fish and breast milk, you'd think that the issue would have received more than the cursory attention of the chemical trade press and one day of 'here's EPA's newest report' in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*."

Lester warned that dioxin is the DDT of the '90s. "It is persistent, pervasive and showing up in the bodies of people all over the world. It differs from DDT in that the main concern with DDT was its carcinogenicity. With dioxin, not only is it a potent carcinogen, but its non-cancer causing effects (infertility, depressed immune response, endometriosis, loss of sex drive, diabetes) occur at very low levels, levels already found in the general population. These and other non-cancer effects may prove

to be more important than dioxin's ability to cause cancer. We have to know what dioxin is, where it is coming from, and how it's hurting us before we can do anything about it. And, we need to know that we can do something about it. Not lifestyle changes, but saving our lives."

Lester charges corporate America is benefiting from the limited media coverage given dioxin. "More specifically, the chemical and paper industry that does not want to alter its production practices to eliminate the chemicals (largely chlorine) that generate dioxin as a by-product of production. Industry says that we need more studies and they hire high powered public relations firms to argue their points and deluge the mainstream media with issues designed to confuse and defuse the press's interest. Government is reluctant to act and finds it easiest to do nothing but study and study and study and study ..."

The organization Lester works for, the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste, has begun a campaign to educate the American public about the dangers of dioxin. "We have written several additional articles for our newsletter, prepared 'campaign kits,' sent copies to grassroots environmental organizations and to the mainstream press. We have written and published a book—*Dying from Dioxin* (South

End Press, 1995)—and have begun efforts to create alliances with organizations across the country to educate people and begin to eliminate dioxin exposures. Still, there has been very little media interest and coverage of this story."

24 **CENSORED**

## U.S. Trails Most Developed Nations in Maternal Health Ranking

Sources:

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Date: 7/25/95

Title: "Deadly Differences in Prenatal Care"

Author: Ramon G. McLeod

THE NEW YORK TIMES

Date: 7/26/95

Title: "In a Ranking of Maternal Health, U.S. Trails Most Developed Nations"

Author: Philip J. Hilts

SYNOPSIS: An estimated 1.3 million women die worldwide every year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth, according to a report from Population Action International, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

Exhibit "5-2"

The problem results from a deadly confluence of economic and social factors related to pregnancy and childbirth, most associated with a lack of prenatal care and medical personnel, according to the researchers.

The study reviewed data in ten categories of maternal health and gave each of the 118 countries surveyed a score based on its performance in those categories. Areas rated included the number of women who die during childbirth, teenage pregnancy, contraceptive use, prenatal care, and availability of safe abortions.

The countries with the best overall rankings were, in order, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Belgium. Ranked the worst were Mali, Congo, Somalia, Angola, and Zaire. In the latter three countries, the average woman has more than six babies in her lifetime, and maternal death rates range from 600 to 1,000 per 100,000 births.

The study shows that the chance of dying from pregnancy or childbirth varies dramatically in different parts of the world, from 1 in 7 in Mali to about 1 in 17,000 in Italy.

The rate in the United States is 1 in 5,669 and the U.S. was ranked 18th. The U.S. did not rank higher among the developed nations largely because of teenage pregnancies—its rate is about six times that of European nations—and a relatively low rate of contraceptive use.

Although it still fell in the study's "very low risk" group of countries, the United States ranked behind such emerging countries as Taiwan and Singapore.

Dr. Shanti R. Conly, Director of Policy Research for Population Action International, warned that the U.S. "is likely to drop even farther if this Congress continues as it has started." A proposal to end public contraceptive services in the U.S. has been approved in committee, she said.

Although an important factor affecting the ranking is a country's relative wealth, according to Dr. Conly, some quite poor countries have worked on women's health issues and ranked well, while other nations of great wealth scored relatively poorly.

SSU Censored Researcher:  
Doug Huston

COMMENTS: Ramon G. McLeod, author of the *San Francisco Chronicle* article, said the subject of "prenatal care of women in the Third World, and even in industrial states, is hardly one that gets much attention in the media. It just isn't the kind of subject matter that grabs a lot of journalists, male or female. The reason, I think, is that most U.S. editors and writers don't see it as an issue that affects Americans much. The reality is that it affects us both directly and indirectly.

"High maternal death rates are almost always found in countries with unstable populations. When women are healthier they have healthier, and fewer babies. So while the average American reader may not care about whether a mother in Kenya survives childbirth, she may care a great deal about the impact of high population growth on the environment and immigration pressures. And if she cares about these issues she may be more willing to support the funding increases needed to help other women survive their childbirths."

McLeod feels the only ones who benefit from the lack of coverage are those that "don't want to spend any money on overseas development or who may somehow believe that improving maternal health equals abortion, which it doesn't."

**25 CENSORED**

## **E. Coli— Now A National Epidemic—Kills 500 Americans Annually**

Source:

ABC-NEWS 20/20 Transcript #1538

Date: 9/22/95

Title: "Always, Always Well Done"

Author: Reported by Arnold Diaz

SYNOPSIS: Most Americans first became familiar with E. coli several years ago when four children died from eating hamburgers at Jack In the Box restaurants. What millions of people don't know is that there have been dozens of outbreaks since then and many hundreds of people have died. The problem has not been resolved, but rather has worsened.

E. coli 0157H7 has now become so widespread it is being called an epidemic. Official estimates reveal that E. coli is killing as many as 500 people a year and causing another 20,000 people to become sick.

The deadly E. coli, first discovered in hamburger in 1982, has increased significantly over the past decade. It's found in the intestines and feces of some cattle and is sometimes accidentally transferred onto the meat during the slaughtering process. With steaks and roasts, E. coli isn't considered much of a problem because it lies on the surface and is easily killed during cooking. But when the meat is ground up, the bacteria on the surface can get mixed into the middle of the hamburger where it's much harder to cook out.

E. coli is not in every hamburger, but it could be in any hamburger. With an estimated one out of every 1,000 hamburgers containing this organism, this should be a matter of concern for most Americans. Americans eat more than 20 billion